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Navy Medicine Supports Military Medical Technology Month

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By Vice Adm. Matthew L. Nathan, U.S. Navy Surgeon General

After a decade of war, we have seen military medical technology advance by leaps and bounds. I am always impressed with the progress we have made in the realms of clinical informatics, prosthetics, and modeling and simulation. It is truly remarkable how far we have come. We are performing at a level that is unprecedented.

This month we celebrate the innovative advancements in military medical technology. As our beneficiaries and populations we serve continue to grow, so does our drive to be on the forefront of innovation and make sure we are setting the bar for patient and family centered care.

We are affected by technology every single day. From satellite communications to apps on our mobile devices, it is clear that we are living in the age of technology. Nowhere have more advancements for us been made in patient and family-centered care than in our medical treatment facilities.

As we move forward to meet our goals of readiness, value and jointness, we will optimize the use of clinical informatics, technology and telemedicine. Clinical Informatics is the provider-driven integration of information technology and clinical expertise in pursuit of more efficient and enhanced patient care.

Working side by side, our clinicians and information technology professionals are creating the common language that is essential for successfully exchanging health information. Increasing use of health information technology and the need for Navy Medicine to adopt an integrated health record is a key priority. As of 2011, the Department of Defense's inpatient clinical online documentation system, also known as the Essentris® EMRT inpatient electronic medical record, has now been deployed in all 59 MTFs (19 Navy) across the military health system and continues to grow.

As part of this mission, Navy Medicine is dedicating crucial assets and helping to plot the future course for the DoD and VA's inter-agency interoperable electronic health record (EHR) effort. Navy clinical informatics is aligned with our sister Services in its vision and mission to deliver the promise of cost-effective, efficient, and reliable health care through

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collaborative efforts across the military enterprise.

In the future, we will be looking at supporting the Interagency Program Office with Navy Medicine's integrated electronic health record (iEHR) requirements through early and continual clinical user involvement. We will be using the iEHR across the enterprise through continuous development, testing, and certification processes. We will also be looking at transforming the DoD's AHLTA electronic medical record (EMR) to a nation-wide Health Information Network to improve interoperability in federal, state, VA, and DoD EMR's. As we continue to focus on our three goals, the EMR will be a crucial piece in how we track patient data and increase value in the care we provide.

The advancements we have seen in prosthetic development are astonishing. Once something imagined in science fiction, these advanced prosthetics now aid our wounded warriors in their everyday lives. Specifically, the Modular Prosthetic Limb (MPL) is a brain-controlled prosthetic, which has nearly as much dexterity as a natural limb, 22 degrees of motion, and independent movement of fingers. The MPL was developed as part of a four-year program by the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (APL), along with Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU). As we move forward, we will see more collaboration like this with our sister Services and civilian counterparts to create innovative techniques and technologies that are joint in nature.

We have also seen much improvement in modeling and simulation over the past ten years. In particular, for TBI care, we are using the virtual environment to challenge the brain through specialized video games and other computer-based programs that provide visual, spatial, language and coordination tasks. Another cutting edge technology that has come to fruition includes advancements in hand, extremity, and even face transplantation for which simulation plays a key role. In education and training, we now have high technology and hyper-realistic training tools that can help Navy medical personnel, from corpsmen to surgeons, in improving their cognitive, psychomotor, and affective capabilities to deliver world-class care to our war fighters and Navy and Marine Corps family.

As we turn the corner on over a decade of war, innovative technology will be a pillar on our way forward. We have come light years since the early days of military medicine, but we will need new innovations and joint solutions to take us to where we need to be. I look to you to be the future of Navy Medicine and am proud to be your surgeon general.

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